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Hongkong, 28th October, 1897.

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The Daily Press.

HONGKONG, OCTOBER 28th, 1897.

As was recently remarked in this column,

it is much to be regretted that China has not,

among her officials, a single man of com-

manding influence and intellectual force

who is able to administer the govern-

ment honestly. LI HUNG-CHANG, the

best known and undoubtedly the most

central figure in Chinese politics, is put out

of court on account of the corruptness of

his administration and his comparative lack

of influence at Peking. The fact that the

work of providing for the defence of the

Empire had for about a quarter of a cen-

tury been practically intrusted to him,

together with well nigh unlimited power

and abundant funds, with the result

shown during the war with Japan, would

have secured his permanent disgrace. In

China the failure of the costly but ineffec-

tive army and navy had built up simply

disgrace in the eyes of the people. His

invaluable to admit of his being punished

in disgrace. He was wanted in order to

repair, by diplomacy, a part of the ruin

he had created by greed and mismanage-

ment. But though Li has not been exactly

disgraced from office, he is now regarded

with suspicion and dislike. His influence

is no longer paramount in the Grand

Council. Nor is he, on the whole, to be

regarded as a man who has had such

large possibilities in his grasp should be

during the recent war, his patriotism has

never been suspected, and no ride hands

can tear away the curtain that hides the

true official and reveal the corrupt and self-

seeking mandarin. But though China's

political influence has undergone no

sensible diminution, his administrative

energy has sustained a shock. He has

demonstrated to the Central Government

that while he has courage and enterprise

to start new and important under-

takings, he has never had the perse-

verance and administrative energy

to see them carried out efficiently. Thus

he is perpetually instituting some new

innovation, although these already com-

menced are seldom allowed to arrive at

fruition. For instance, he has just im-

ported from the United States a Mr. G. D.

Brill, who is engaged to start a Model

Farm and a Museum to exhibit the

different agricultural implements in use

in Europe and America. The idea is a good

one, but the chances are that, like most of

His Excellency's projects, it will never

get beyond the experimental stage. Some

years ago CHANG founded a School of

Chemistry at Wuchang, but it now consists

of one of the Professor, two students,

and one other, who by his ignorance of

English and Mandarin is disqualified from

acquiring any knowledge of this science.

Then again, the spinning mill erected at

great cost and containing valuable plant,

is a failure owing to his objection to

employ foreigners to superintend the op-

erations. The Wuchang correspondent of our

Shanghai morning contemporary says that

among other peculiarities this mill contains

“a number of excellent English looms”

“which have never been unpacked, but

“their place is to be supplied by inferior

“machinery from Japan which requires

“new buildings and another set of en-

“gines.” Obviously this is a job on the

part of the official underlings. CHANG him-

self is superior to the avianice which has

wrecked LI HUNG-CHANG's reputation, but

he is strongly prejudiced against foreigners

and puts confidence in his officials, which

is grossly abused. All his numerous schemes

for the development of Chinese resources are

therefore doomed to failure, and he becomes

discredited thereby.

Taoist SHING and Governor HU, who

was recently appointed Director-General

of Railways North of the Yellow River

remain for consideration. SHING is an

apt pupil of the mis-called “Bismarck of

China,” and has improved upon his pre-

ceptor both in daring and originality.

Whether he will ever win the trust of the

Emperor is another matter. We should

hardly think that this was possible. He is

too notorious. At the same time he may

prove clever enough to restrain his squeezing

proclivities within bounds until he has

achieved some successes and made himself

indispensable. His populations might then,

like those of some of his predecessors, be

overlooked. He is a man of a better stamp,

but he will have to fight against the unpar-

tyrictic mandarins who regard office as a mere

step towards fortune. The honest official in

China is a rare bird, and he is not likely to

become an official mark. For these reasons we are

not inclined to take a very sanguine view of the

success of schemes for the material progress

of the Empire. The trail of the serpent is

over them all.

THE rebellion in Manchuria, concerning

which very little authentic intelligence has

been received hitherto, seems likely to cause

the Peking Government a good deal of

anxiety and trouble. The number of the

insurgents who have taken this field is esti-

mated at over 8,000 men, and they are now

collected at a place called Pingchuan, in the

Jeho district outside the Great Wall. They

have succeeded in capturing Pingchuan and

there they have arrested the progress of the

Imperialist Commander, General NIEN,

who has had to form an entrenched camp

some six or seven miles from the town and there

await reinforcements. These are being sent

in sufficient numbers to bring up his force

to 8,000 infantry besides three batteries of

artillery. The rebels are naturally huff

inferior in arms, and reputed to be also in-

ferior in discipline (the discipline of Chinese

regulars is, however, nothing to boast of);

but these circumstances may be

balanced by the fact that they are

said to have a body of 40,000 men

from which to draw reinforcements. They

are also not badly provided with arms

and ammunition, as they have purchased or

picked up more than seven-tenths of those

abandoned by the rabble rout who were

sent to fight the Japanese when the latter

advanced into the country. At Tientsin

some apprehension is said to exist that,

if General NIEN is defeated—a not im-

probable contingency—the rebels will

attempt to capture the railway and advance

on Tientsin. The Viceroy WANG has

given orders for the disciplined force

under YUAN SHI-KI, now stationed at

Hsiao-chang, fifteen miles west of

Tientsin, to be ready to start for that

city at a moment's notice—a proof that

absolute reliance is not placed on General

NIEN. It would appear that this insurrec-

tion is more formidable than most of the

little local rebellions continually occurring

in China, on account of the harder char-

acter of the population and the possession

by them of a comparatively large supply of

arms. The superiority of the Imperialists

has hitherto been mainly in arms and dis-

cipline, but if the former proves an illus-

trary advantage the latter rarely counts for much.

Quite apart from the desirability on grounds

of good government and the safety of

Tientsin, there is another reason why the

Peking Government should do their best to

promptly quell this outbreak so near to the

metropolitan province. The Trans-Siberian

Railway is to be extended through Man-

churia, and Russia will naturally feel re-

luctant to have this most important high-

way left to the mercy of a horde of rebels.

The Russian Government may therefore, in the

event of any serious Imperialist reverses, in-

stinct on occupying Manchuria with Russian

troops to secure the position. It is not

too soon to point out that such an occupa-

tion would be infinitely prolonged and might

eventuate in a new and most dangerous

(to Russia) realisation of the Siberian

Frontier.

A meeting of the Sanitary Board will be held

this afternoon.

The N. P. steamer *Bravo*, from Yokohama,

arrived at Portland on the 24th instant.

The N. P. steamer *Olympic* arrived at

Tientsin from Yokohama on the 24th instant.

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Low Water.		
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not low	13 10	1
not low	14 11	1
"	15 5	1

